

Bulgaria, such as trade opportunities and cooperative ventures, family reunification, human rights, and East-West dialogue.

On the morning of June 13 President Todorov received me at his office in the National Assembly Building for an hour-long meeting. President Todorov, in speaking of parliamentary reform, indicated that the number of deputies would likely be reduced from 408 to 250, and that the assembly would remain unicameral. The assembly has three short sittings per year, by legislation, the substantive work of government being carried out by permanent commissions.

He asserted that the judiciary was supreme to Parliament for matters other than constitutional ones, for which a new Constitutional Court is to be established as part of the reform process. From a discussion of the role and influence of the two parties in the National Assembly, it appeared from my conversations with them that the Bulgarian Agrarian National Party, with only 120,000 members in the country, was far from the point at which it could seriously challenge the 800,000 strong Bulgarian Communist Party. Of course, we have seen from subsequent events that that was not the case.

President Todorov explained that administrative reforms had drastically reduced the number of government departments, and those remaining had been vested with increased responsibility. Turning to the economic restructuring, he referred to the importance to Bulgaria of foreign trade and its urgent need to progress to greater industrial development.

He spoke of the measures being implemented to move away from total state ownership and towards cooperatives, joint ventures, private and mixed ownership as factors in deepening its relations with its trading partners. The Bulgarian government would, in future, concentrate on strategic planning, and not on the operation of commercial enterprises. President Todorov, responding to my expression of Canada's appreciation of the fashion in which family reunification matters between our two countries had been settled, pointed out that the assembly had adopted four new laws to meet the requirements of the Vienna Accord (1989 CSCE) and these were now in effect.

He also referred to the importance of the Conference on Protection of the Environment to be held in Sofia in October 1989, convened by the participating states of the CSCE.

[Translation]

On June 13 I was a guest of Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Mladenov who has since become secretary general of the Communist Party and head of state. Referring to the question of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, he expressed satisfaction about the over-all improvement in East-West relations and the progress made in the Vienna talks on traditional disarmament. He stated that Bulgaria is anxious to entertain close and harmonious relations with Canada in all spheres of activities.

In the following exchange, the minister voiced his regret over the fact that Canada had intervened at the Paris CSCE Conference on human aspects and criticized Bulgaria concerning the exodus of residents of Turkish origin. On that subject

he pointed out that Bulgaria has adopted the necessary legislative measures to live up to her CSCE commitments whereby citizens are free to leave and return to Bulgaria if they wish. He denied the existence of any program to force the assimilation of people of Turkish origin.

My response was that Canada also denounces all cases of human rights violations wherever they occur and that the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Paris intervention was indeed an impartial and constructive criticism, to the extent that we had considered that Bulgaria did not honour her human rights commitments.

Despite his strong sentiments—this was at the time when the exodus from Bulgaria was gaining momentum and increasingly became the focus of world attention—the minister indicated at the end of our conversation that he was looking forward to the impending trade talks with Canada and that he hoped our country would send a strong delegation to Sofia's CSCE conference on the environment in October.

[English]

At my meeting with Mr. Zhivkov, President of the State Council and Head of State, the President elaborated on the same points regarding Bulgaria's compliance with its CSCE commitments, which Ambassador Bacon and I indicated would be fully reported to our government, as would his invitation to Canada to seek more information on the situation in Bulgaria. The President referred to Bulgaria's program of economic change, which he characterized as "radical" in that it would embrace, at least at lower levels of the economy, some capitalist practices. He commented that there was room for much improvement in the commercial relations between Canada and Bulgaria. He asked us to convey his greetings to the leaders and people of Canada.

I was also received for an exchange of views by Mr. Andrey Lukanov, the Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, who, by the way, is rumoured to be the next premier and who is very closely implicated in the economic reforms taking place. He reviewed the reforms being undertaken to change the Bulgarian economy and create a favourable climate for investment. Mr. Lukanov characterized the reforms as constituting a striking transformation for Bulgarians; the new laws bring forward a totally new notion of property ownership. Decree 56, a decree on economic activity which came into effect on January 1, 1989, initiates a new and difficult process of redistribution of economic functions, especially as regards day-to-day interventions in the market. He confirmed that the government would concentrate on strategic planning and the management of foreign economic relations, and he appealed for understanding in the transition period during which managers would have to learn how to handle full responsibility for financial operations. In referring to Bulgaria's wish to accede to the GATT, he expressed appreciation for Canada's efforts in establishing the working party to review Bulgarian accession, and said he envisioned Bulgaria as a new partner for Canada in the multilateral as well as the bilateral sphere.